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A
R. C. S. M. A. L.
LETTER

TO A

FRIEND:

Occasioned by a

RHAPSODY,

Delivered in the

OLD JEWRY,

BY

A Reverend Bookseller in *London*;

At the shutting-up his EVENING ENTERTAIN-
MENT, for the last Winter Season.

ABRAHAM TAYLOR.

*Quid dignum tanto foret hic promissor HIATU?
Parsurient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.*

HORACE.

LONDON:

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S I R,

I Always look'd upon it, as unworthy of a Searcher after Truth, for him to be shy of reading what is wrote against the Sentiments he has embraced; for if he has taken up his Opinions upon good and sure Grounds, he will be more established in them, by considering what is groundlessly objected to them; but if he has fixed himself in some particular Way of thinking, without having taken all proper Methods to embellish himself, and to gain sure Grounds to go upon, he should be ready, on every proper Occasion, to re-examine the Matter; that so he, upon Recollection, may be able to give a Reason for what, it is to be hoped, he sincerely believes and practises.

There are many Points in natural and revealed Religion, of the Truth of which no rational considerate Man will doubt; which yet will have Objections raised against them, as long as the

World stands: And these Objections may have Plausibility enough in them, to shock weak and unsettled Persons, to whom they appear in the Garb of Novelty, and to whom they present themselves as some mighty Matters; whilst they may not raise the least Disturbance in the Mind of him, who has settled himself in a rational Belief of the Things in question; and that not barely by listening after what Objections every conceited Scribbler may raise against his Opinions, but by carefully weighing the Difficulties which attend each Side of the Question, and falling in with that Side which is attended with the least.

As Objecting is really endless, every one who does not desire to be driven about, hither and thither, *with every Wind of Doctrine*, should be, in some measure, prepared for Objections, by carefully weighing the Merits of any Cause, before he actually engages in it. Therefore no one should be backward to consider what, with any Degree of Closeness of Thought and Argument, is published against the Scheme he has received and believed. When an Attempt is made to sap the Foundation
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of that Faith, which a Christian has gather'd from the Oracles of God, if he has Opportunity, he should seriously and impartially consider, what is advanced, from Scripture and Reason, against the Opinions he thought agreeable to divine Revelation, and not inconsistent with sound Reason: And when a Person does this, he will seldom find much said, on the Side of Error, which he has not met with before, in some other Form. The Objections which Men of corrupt Minds raise against the Truth, have little Effect on the thoughtful and judicious, but they seldom fail of shocking the lazy and superficial Christian, who is ready, at every turn, to change his Sentiments, provided he may fall in with that Faith which is fashionable. Tho' I am for paying a due Respect to every thing which carries the Face of an Argument; yet there are many Writings, levell'd against the Truth, which I cannot think a sincere Searcher after what is really true, ought much to regard: Such are Lampoons, which may, like Squibs, make a Blaze, for a little time; but can only be pleasing to such as are Children in Understanding.

standing. Such likewise are loose Rhapsodies, wherein Argument is little aimed at, and which are made up of a few incoherent Sentences, jumbled together, without Method or Connexion. There are some Authors too, who merit not much Regard; and they are such as set up themselves to be some great Persons, seek after Reputation, by scarce any thing else than running out of the common Way; and pursue Fame, only by Affectation of Novelty.

These Considerations, Sir, which, more or less, occur to me, whenever I peruse any thing wrote against what I believe, made me bestow only a cursory reading on a Discourse, published by a Reverend Bookseller, entitled, *Knowledge and Practice necessary to Happiness*. When it first appeared in Print, I looked upon it to be a sudden Production of an Author, whose Talent does not lie in fixed Thought; and therefore I did not apprehend it required to have much Thought spent upon it; but you, and other Friends of mine, having judg'd it proper that some Notice should be taken of it, I, this Week, read it again; which I should

should scarce have done, had my Friends agreed with me, that such crude indigested Composures should be treated with Neglect. My reading it afresh has occasioned the giving you this Trouble; which you would have been free from, had you been content to let such an abortive Essay have sunk, without Regard, into Oblivion. To oblige you, and some others, I will shew so much Respect to it, as to consider some things laid down in it, which, I think, are utter'd without Care and Caution.

When I first read it, I looked upon it as the boldest Defiance I had ever seen, thrown at all who have any Regard to the good old Protestant Doctrines, which our Fathers gathered, by serious Examination, from Scripture, and faithfully handed down to us their Posterity, cleared from such Abuses as the idolatrous Church of *Rome* had thrown upon them. But I thought it to be only the Sally of a Knight-Errant, who, to shew himself some wonderful Champion, boldly challenges all Comers, and throws his Gauntlet, without considering that Persons may enter the Lists, and take it up, who
may

may be far too strong for him to grapple with.

The first time I looked on this Sample of Knight-Errantry, or rather, of *Quixotism*, I could not help thinking on a very * polite Writer's Account of Nonsense; which he has divided into high and low, and has, humorously, compared to small Beer. *Low Nonsense*, in a poor dispirited Stile, creeps along servilely, thro' Darknes and Confusion, gropes its Way among Self-Contradictions, and grovels thro' Absurdities; it is like small Beer in the Barrel, which is flat, tasteless, and insipid; on the contrary, *high Nonsense* blusters, and makes a Noise; it stalks upon hard Words, and rattles thro' Polysyllables; it is loud and sonorous, smooth and periodical; it has a majestic Appearance, and wears a most tremendous Garb; like *Æsop's Ass*, cloathed with the *Lion's Skin*: This Sort of Nonsense is like small Beer in Bottles; which has no more Strength and Spirit than that in the Cask, but yet, by the Help of a little Wind got into it, frets, flies and bounces.

* See the late Mr. Secretary Addison's *Whig-Examiner*, Numb. IV.

The ingenious Author has acquainted us, that we meet with low Nonsense in every *Grub-street* Production; but he did not recollect, that he had met with any, who had but the Sublime in Nonsense, in Divinity, except the late Doctor *Sackeverel*. What other Examples there may have been since, I know not; but sure I am, a complete Sample of it has been given, in the Discourse before mentioned; only the Author has dashed it, here and there, with low Nonsense; for tho' his Stile is generally smooth and sonorous, yet he has not been above blundering on some Self-Contradictions; and has condescended, now and then, to grope his Way among Inconsistencies. I could not keep these Things out of my Head, on first perusing his Performance; and I am sorry, that, upon a more exact reading it, I could meet with nothing to prevent their recurring to my Thoughts.

One of the most flagrant Examples of Nonsense in the Sublime, that ever I met with, is the following Passage in our doubty Hero's Sermon; where after he had roundly * told us, that

* Pag. 22, 23.

Reason evidently teaches us, that Faith is not Religion, (which Expression, I believe, neither he nor any one else understand) he has added, Religion does not so much consist in knowing that God is, and that he is an infinitely wise, and good, and just, and powerful Being, the Creator, Preserver, and Governour of the World; but in adoring, loving, and praising him, as such; in owning our Dependence on him, and submitting ourselves to his Will, and in being careful to secure his Favour, by a cheerful and universal Obedience to his Commands. I have produced his own Words, for the Reader's Astonishment. One would think a Man must be asleep, or out of his Senses, when he uttered such an Assertion as this. What Man in his Wits would ever say, that Religion does not so much consist in knowing the first Principle of all Religion, Natural and Revealed, which is, That there is a God; as in worshipping one, whom we know not whether he is or no? No one, who exercised his Reason, would suggest, That we might adore, worship and praise God, as he is an infinitely wise, good, just, and powerful Being, the Creator, Preserver, and Governour of the World;

World, without knowing that he is all this. I have not so mean an Opinion of the Author's Abilities, as to imagine, that out of the Abundance of his Heart, his Mouth here spoke; but would rather take it as Nonsense dropping from him unawares; whilst, in the Eagerness of his Spirit, he endeavoured to run down such as lay any Stress on Faith. I do not at all wonder at what he has * said after this, That Religion does not consist in our believing ourselves to be † elected, and chosen, from Eternity, to Salvation; or that Christ died for us, exclusive of others; because I know he despises the ancient, but now unfashionable Doctrines of free Election, and particular Redemption; and has been some Years noted for prating against them with malicious Words; tho', poor Man! it is above his Abilities to disprove them; but I own, I was surprized to find him saying, as he does, in the Passage which I have remarked, That Religion does not consist so much in knowing that God is, as in worshiping Him.

* Page 23.

† Here mark the Tautology.

I take it, Sir, to be favourable in me to my Author, to allow him to have spoke this without Thought; for if we suppose that he had a Meaning, agreeable to his Expressions, it will follow, that he has insolently contradicted Scripture, in a Matter in which I do not see, according to his Scheme, he had any Occasion to be singular. He has told us, Faith is not properly Religion; the Scripture expressly has * declared, that *without Faith, it is impossible to please God*; for which Assertion, this Reason is given, *he that comes to God, must believe that he is; and that he is a Rewarder of such as diligently seek him.* These are the Words of Truth and Soberness. What then shall we think of one, who, when the Scripture has solemnly assured us, that without Faith we cannot please God; and, that whoever worships him, must know that he is; can have the Boldness to say, Faith is not properly Religion; and, Religion does not so much consist in knowing that God is, as in adoring Him? Besides, our wise Author has informed us, that Religion consists

* Heb. xi. 6.

in adoring, loving, and praising God, as an infinitely wise, good, just, and powerful Being; certainly then the Practice of Religion is entirely built on our knowing that God is all-wise, almighty, and infinitely good and just: Might we adore, love, and praise him, as such, without knowing him to be so, our Religion would consist in worshipping an unknown God; and in loving and praising we cannot tell who: So that what the Apostle *Paul* * branded as witless Superstition, in the bigotted *Athenians*, must be recommended as pure Religion, to † such as will insist upon it, that their Religion must be understood, before it can or ought to be believed.

I doubt not, Sir, but that either you will, with me, be surprized to see what dangerous Lengths some Men, who abound in Self-Conceit, will run into, in Matters of Moment; or else that you will join with me, in commiserating the great Masters of Reason, who engross Politeness to themselves, for falling into such Blunders, as are inconsistent with common Sense, and that

* *Acts* xvii. 22, 23.

† *Dedication*, p. ix.

you will not have the greater Esteem of them, tho' they may pretend they are the Men, and Wisdom must die with them. However, out of Charity, I hope the latter, and not the former, is our Author's Case. I am, however, filled the more with Wonder, that the Gentleman I am concerned with, should vent such a crude Absurdity, after he had, in the * Beginning of the same Sermon, taken Occasion to hint the Agreement between true Natural Reason, and the Gospel; and to give this as the Reason of it: *That the Grand Principles of Both are entirely the same; such as the Belief of a God, and a Providence; and of God's being the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* I leave it to him, either to engage in the difficult Task of reconciling this with what I have been remarking in him; or else, with Shame, to acknowledge, that when he had got half way his Discourse, through the distempered Heat which filled his Head, he had forgot what, in the Beginning of it, he delivered, more agreeable to Scripture and Sense; which Piece of Forgetful-

ness, I believe, he would scarce have been guilty of, had he not worked up his Passions to a greater Commotion, in the Process of his Discourse, than at first.

Another Instance of the sublime kind of Nonsense, is this Assertion * of our Great Genius, *That mere Knowledge does not render a Man useful to others.* I own, with him, that it signifies nothing to a Man's self, if he understands the Theory of Religion, and does not practise according to his Knowledge. Nay, I will grant, that when a Man is forward in chattering on Natural Religion, and on the Uselessness of mere Faith, yet if at the same time he is sadly defective in his Observance of the Rules of Justice, in his Commerce and Dealings with others, makes a Jest of breaking his Word with his Fellow-Traders, and renders himself a common Proverb for lying, † his not thinking an orthodox Belief is the great Command of the Gospel, his ‡ not glorying in this, that his Belief is more sound, and his Principles more conformable to the Gospel, than those of others, and his || having

* Pag. 19. † P. 11. ‡ P. 25. || Dedic. p. 10, 11.

no Regard to the Dictates of fallible Men, nor any Fear of their peevish and impotent Censures, ought not to give him any Character, amongst sincere and honest Men; but should make him abhorred by all, who have a Spark of the generous Fire of Honesty left burning in their Breasts.

Tho' I am ready to grant all this, yet I can never fall in with the Assertion, That mere Knowledge cannot render a Man useful to others. And I am the more convinced of this, because our Author, in what * he would have pass for his Confirmation of this unaccountable Paradox, has delivered nothing but some Common-place Stuff, about the little Use a Man himself can draw from mere Knowledge; and of its not being sufficient to prevent him from being punished by God, and the Civil Magistrate, in case he is immoral, and acts contrary to the publick Welfare. This comes not up to his Point. Those who have immediate Dealings with such a Person, as he has described, may not be much the better for his good Notions, any more than Men might be the better, who have

to do with our Author, for his just Sentiments of Natural and Revealed Religion, did he not act agreeably to them; but certainly these just Sentiments, if they are so, might be useful to others, who have no Opportunity of observing his Inconsistency; if that could be supposed to be the Case, as it is to be hoped it cannot. I am very well satisfied *Balaam* was a Cheat; yet I must own, I am very much pleased, and I hope benefited, by his declaring *, in an orthodox Stile, that *God is not a Man, that he should lie; nor the Son of Man, that he should repent*; that what he has said, he will do; and what he has spoke, he will make good: And by his † foretelling, That a Star should rise out of *Jacob*, which he should see, but not at that time; and should behold, but at a distance. If we look into the Writings of some of the Pagans, we may surely reap Benefit by them, tho' we should suppose they acted not according to what they knew; thus for instance, *Sallust*, the noble Historian, was a Man who painted Vice, especially the Vices of those of a higher Rank, in the most odious Form; but he was him-

* *Numb.* xxiii. 19. † *xxiv.* 17.

self abandoned to all Profligacy; surely I may, to my Profit, behold Vice, by him drawn in its proper Colours, notwithstanding I do not look on him as a Pattern of Virtue. I may make good Use of what *Cicero* has spoke, of the Immortality of the Soul, of Virtue, Liberty, and Love to a Man's Country, tho' at the same time, I know that this Great Orator was not a Man of strict Virtue; that he was a Time-Server, and flattered those at one time, whom he reviled at another; and was never settled in a firm Adherence to the Good of his Country. I may, sure, gain some Advantage from what *Seneca* has said in Contempt of Riches, and Grandeur, tho' I may own him to be a Slave to Covetousness and Ambition. I may certainly draw some Benefit from the sublime and strict Morality of *Marc. Aurelius*, the Emperor, tho' at the same time, I acknowledge he was a persecuting uncharitable Bigot, not only forward to pass Censures on others, but to condemn Christians, to Death. And, to come nearer to our own Times, I may reap Pleasure from Bishop *Parker's* Book on the divine Attributes, though I know the Author was a Person of no Worth; and may derive Advantage from

M. More's,

M. More's learned and judicious Notes on the *New Testament*, tho' I am satisfied the Author was a vicious Man. I am sensible, the Gentleman with whom I have to do, would be very loth to have his Assertion run to the Length it might justly be carried; and therefore I am content this Matter may be reckoned an Example of that sublime Nonsense, in uttering which a Man, without any Meaning, seems to have it, and so imposes upon us, by the Sound and Ranging of his Words, that one is apt to fancy they signify something, when in Reality they are mere Sounds, uttered out of a vain Desire of warmly opposing, and contradicting, he knows not what.

I find, Sir, our Author has not contented himself with letting us know, how capable he is of giving us Examples of high Nonsense, but he has condescended to that which is low; he has groped his Way among Self-Contradictions, and has grovel'd thro' Absurdities. I do not say he has always done this, in one and the same Sentence; but I humbly apprehend, that in different Parts of his short Performance, he has laid down Things inconsistent. He has begun it with big Words, that * *Knowledge is essentially ne-*

cessary to the Character of a Christian; and that without it, there can be no regular Virtue; he has farther * told us, that the Practice of Religion can never be supported, but by real Knowledge; that the Nature of true Religion must be first understood, before the End and Design of it can be complied with: Nay, he goes farther than this; for he has † told us, if we do not understand the full Evidence there is for the Truth of Christianity, and if our Knowledge of its main Principles is defective, we shall be immoral in our Practice, and our Obedience will but be partial. But yet, in another ‡ Place, he has let us know, that his Opinion is, that Knowledge is not properly Religion; but is a grand Help to promote the Practice of it. How he can reconcile these Things, he best knows; if Religion must be supported by real Knowledge, that Knowledge can be no Part of Religion, but only a Help to promote the Practice of it, is a thing I cannot understand.

He has || told us, that which renders our Faith acceptable to God, as such, or as separate from Practice, and the proper Influence of it, is the Care we have taken in

* P. 7.

† P. 9.

‡ P. 22.

|| Ibid.

our Enquiries after Truth, and a suitable Disposition of Mind to receive and submit to the Evidence of it. Now I cannot conceive, how that Faith can be separate from Practice, and the proper Influence of it, which is not separate from Care in searching after Truth, and a suitable Disposition of Mind to submit to the Evidence of it. It is monstrous to suppose, there can be a suitable Disposition of Mind to receive Truth, without a suitable Practice accompanying it. We may as well suppose, that East and West may come together; or that Heaven and Earth may meet. Had this Gentleman said, There may be great speculative Knowledge, where Practice is neglected; he had said no more than what any Person, who knows the World, will be ready to grant; but to say, There may be a suitable Disposition of Mind in us, to receive the Truth, which may render our Faith, as such, acceptable to God; and yet to suppose this may be without a suitable Practice; is what I never met with flowing from the Pen of any sober Writer; but must leave you to consider, whether this is not darkening Counsel, with Words without Knowledge; and whether an Author, who

who thus gropes among the Darkneſs of Self-Contradictions, and grovels thro' Abſurdities, is a Perſon likely to aſſert the Truth of Natural and the Chriſtian Religion, by ſolid Reason and Argument. But of that we muſt judge, when he ſhall preſent us with the Courſe of his Evening-Entertainments, for the Benefit of many.

It has never been reckoned, by the real Friends of Chriſtianity, that the Goſpel of God, our Saviour, loſt any thing of its Glory, by being myſterious, and not fully to be comprehended by us, in our State of Mortality and Imperfection. The great Author with whom I have to do, is of another Opinion: He ſeems very well * pleaſed, to think, that many of the Subjects he has inſiſted on, are not like to be pleaſing to the Taſte of ſuch, as think Chriſtianity glorious, only as it is myſterious; and that it is the main Excellency of a Chriſtian, to believe heartily, what is incapable of being ever underſtood. And, in another Place, he has the Front to repreſent what is myſterious, as if it meant the ſame with what is irrational. He has either here

darkning Council, with Words without Knowledge. * Pag. 5. where he ſaith, p. 9. Knowledge is not to be had by the Senses, but by the Reason, who

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run into a gross Fallacy, and has play'd upon Words; seeing no one ever was so silly as to say, we must have no manner of Knowledge of what we believe; or else he must be supposed to deny that the Gospel has any thing of Mystery in it. Which is boldly giving the Lie to Scripture itself. I would be unwilling to think, he is for running such a hideous Length; tho' if he does not, it is strange he should say *, that *the true Reason why he esteems and believes Christianity, is not because 'tis a mysterious and unintelligible Institution; but because 'tis a plain Religion, and easy to be understood.* He is, in all probability, guilty of a mean Fallacy here; for a thing may be partly intelligible, which is not fully comprehensible. But to let that pass; with what Insolence does this Boutefeu contradict Scripture, which has expressly told us †, that, *without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness?* This, put into his sneering Language, would be, *Greatly unintelligible is the Doctrine of Godliness.* But I hope none will judge of the Nature of Scripture-Mysteries, by what such a heedless Writer blunders out concerning them.

* Pag. 6. † 1 Tim. iii. 16.

I scarce know what he means by the Christian Religion being plain, and easy to be understood; unless we may suppose he has explained his Sense in the following * remarkable Passage, where he says, that *Truths of the greatest Importance are plain and obvious enough, and soon found out, by common Measures of Diligence and Enquiry; because the Reason and Consciences of Men lead them as naturally to discern them, as any kind of Propositions whatsoever.* From hence it would follow, that the sublimest Truths are as plain and easy to be comprehended, as that Two and Three make Five; which is contradicted by every Man's Experience. I grant, that they who are made wise from Above, and are, by the Spirit, *led into all Truth*, find out the Truths of greatest Moment, and firmly believe whatever God has revealed, because of the divine Authority of Him who reveals it: They reject not the Doctrines of Revelation, because their imperfect Understandings cannot grasp them; they are content to know but in part; and they, with humble Silence, and awful Reverence,

behold, at a Distance, the Depths of infinite Wisdom, which the Plummet of their imperfect Reason can never fully fathom. But this is not the Case of Men left to themselves: When it is so, *the Natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, they are Foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* This is the Doctrine of * Scripture; this shews that the Truths of the greatest Importance are not discovered, only by common Measures of Enquiry. Were Men entirely free from Pride, Passion and Prejudice; that is, were Men what they are not, who knows what mighty Things they might do, by their own Wisdom and Diligence? But as long as Pride remains in the Heart of fallen Man, and the main Design of the Gospel is to thwart his Pride, he will shut his Eyes, and remain in wilful Ignorance, till he has a spiritual Discerning afforded him. This may be reckoned Cant, by our Author; and if it is, I assure you, Sir, I do not much care; for I should take it as the greatest Compliment he can pass upon me, to have the

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

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meanest Opinion of me ; and I should reckon it an Honour to be the Subject of Laughter among the Herd of Spectators who fill the Pit and Side-Boxes of his Theater.

Our Author has given us the Reason why he ever yields his Assent to any divine Truth, in the following Passage: *Whatever can be proved to be a genuine Doctrine of the Great Author and Finisher of my Faith, or of Those who wrote by the Inspiration of his Spirit, I reckon myself obliged, for that Reason, to believe, as far as I can understand it.* So that, according to him, his Understanding is the mighty Thing, at the Bar of which, every Revealed Truth must be arraigned ; and what is a genuine Doctrine of the Author of his Faith, must not be received, on the Credit of that Author, any farther than this great Genius understands it. I do not, I confess, comprehend the Drift of this. If a Revelation, claiming divine Authority, could be proved to contain in it any Doctrine contrary to, and subversive of, right Reason, that very thing would prove such pretended Revelation not to be di-

wine; for God can never contradict himself, or require any thing to be believed, inconsistent with Truth. But, if I am convinced, that the Scripture is a divine Revelation, I must believe all in it to be true; tho', thro' the Weakness of my finite Capacity, I may not be able to understand the Manner of all which Infinite Wisdom has there revealed.

Nothing in the World is more certain, than that we are obliged firmly to believe many things, of which we are in part ignorant. Our Experience tells us, that Gravity is an essential Property of Matter; it would therefore be impertinent, for any to tell us it is an occult, unintelligible Quality; for we know there is such a thing, by its Effects. We are conscious to ourselves, that there is a spiritual Substance in Man; yet we know not the Nature of it, or how it acts on our Bodies: But would it not be irrational, for a Man to deny he carries about in him an active, thinking, rational Substance, because he cannot conceive how it acts on his Body? Let not then our Author, in high Conceit of his own Parts, confound what is mysterious and incomprehensible, with what is irrational and unin-

telligible. This is the Way, not only to sap the Foundations of Revealed Religion, and to root out the Belief of all its Doctrines; but it tends to discard all Natural Religion: Nay, to run down all Philosophical Knowledge. Would he think calmly of this Matter, he might see that his Principles will carry him farther than he is aware; but he does not seem to have a Head cool enough to keep him from running into Extremes. This appears to me to be his Case, as far as I can judge from his Sermon; which is the chief Thing I know him by, not having read his other Productions.

I am afraid, Sir, I have by this time tired you; I am sure I have myself, in examining this Gentleman's Crudities; But there is one thing more, which offers itself to me, before I come to consider the Insults he has thrown out against others; it is this: Some, I suppose, might object, That he preached Natural Religion; and did not preach Christ. This Objection, he *says, is of no Weight with him; and he hopes such as make it are wiser than to ima-

* *Dedicat. p. viii.*

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gine, that Natural Religion is not Part of the Religion of Christ: If it is not, he says, it is not worth while to enquire what his Religion is; if it is, preaching Natural Religion, is preaching Christ. This is as odd a Conceit, as I remember ever to have met with. Indeed, when any thing which is truly Natural Religion, is preached, nothing must be supposed to be in it, inconsistent with, and contradictory to, the Christian Religion; for *Christ came not to destroy the Law of Nature, but to fulfill it*; yet I never heard before, nor I believe any one else, that preaching bare Natural Religion, is preaching Christ. At this rate, we may take many into the List of those that have preach'd Christ, who never thought themselves they did so; such as *Socrates, Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Dion, Plutarch, Epictetus, Arrian*, and the Emperor *Antoninus*. All these Writers have discours'd excellently well, on many Topics and Duties of Natural Religion; yet I conceive, few would reckon a Man sober, who should go about to prove that these Men, though they did not know it, preached Christ, because they taught many things, not inconsistent with some things in his Religion.

ligion. The Scriptures give us a very different Notion of preaching Christ. To preach Christ, in the Scripture-Sense, is to declare him to Sinners, as One who reconciles them to God by his Blood; as One every way sufficient to help them; and as One who has purchased for them eternal Happiness: Of which Things Natural Religion knows nothing. It is to preach *Christ crucify'd*; which is *Foolishness*, to many, who make the greatest Improvements in Natural Religion. It is a hard Matter to know what many Men mean by Natural Religion: At best, I believe it would make a very mean Figure, as a System of Religion, if it were stripped of the noble Embellishments, which those, who despise Scripture, are yet content to steal from thence, to deck it with. I could wish, that the Person I am concerned with, when he publishes his larger Work, would accurately separate Natural from Reveal'd Religion, seeing he does not set up to be a Disbeliever of the latter, did I not fear he has not Talents for it.

Our Author* hopes, that his polite Auditory will think it enough, that he
Dedicated. p. ix.
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represents to them the Principles of Christ's Religion, tho' he is not perpetually repeating his Name. How disagreeable to him, and to them, it may be, to have that Worthy Name too often repeated, I know not; I would hope, however, it is not disagreeable to them to have it repeated, tho' ever so often; yet I must acknowledge, it is a dexterous Way of preaching the Religion of our Saviour, when Men can do it without repeating the Name of Him who founded and published it.

I come now, Sir, to consider how this Gentleman, who stands in Need of such Grains of Allowance, treats other People. I find, in the general, he despises all the World; and by what I can gather, by conversing in the World, the far greater Part of it is even with him. In particular, he raves most terribly *, at rigid Directors of the Faith and Consciences of others; at human Schemes and Creeds being set up, in the room of Christianity. And he has manifested his high Displeasure † against a Set of Men, who can relish no Discourses that are not upon abstruse and metaphysical

* *Dedicat. p. ix.*

† *Serm. p. 6.*

Questions, and shaped according to some certain Systems, which, as to Words and Things, are as tenaciously maintained, as tho' they were the pure and undefiled Religion of Christ himself; nay rather, as tho' they were preferable to the Religion of his Gospel, with whom a Man will never obtain the Character of a good orthodox Christian, unless he believes a great deal more than the Gospel, or at least professes to believe in certain hard technical Words, which are the proper Marks of the Soundness of his Judgment. I suppose this is the Artillery, by which, as his judicious * Prefacer has excellently expressed it, he is to demolish the Suburbs which have been built round the Fortrefs of Christianity, in Times of Security and Peace, for the Interest and Honour of private Persons. Our Author should have told us, who they are, who have given him Occasion to complain of them in such tragical Terms: As he has not acquainted us, who were, in his Eye; what he says might be regarded as mere Noise and Bounce. However, tho' he has not specified to us who they are,

* Mr. Leavelly's Preface, p. 16, 16.

every one, who has read him, applies what he has said to those, who at a time when the first Doctrine of pure Revelation, that of the Blessed Trinity, was attacked, chose to declare their Assent to it, in such Words as could not be perverted, and were, according to their Apprehensions, a good Summary of what the Scripture had revealed, concerning this adorable Mystery. Had our Author blamed them for laying a greater Stress on the Doctrine, than it deserved, he had not been taken Notice of by me; because I think, in such a Case, every one should be left to his own private Opinion. If these were the Persons he has charged, with setting up human Schemes in the room of Christianity, and with tenaciously maintaining metaphysical Questions, drawn from some certain Systems, as tho' they were preferable to Christ's Gospel; he has vented the most impudent Calumnies that ever Man had the Hardiness to utter. But it is not a Matter of much Moment, for any to be thus charged by him; because his Invectives, however spiteful they may be in their Design, are very harmless, as to their Effects; for they are no other than so many Panegyrics:

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And

And for him to rail at Persons, is the greatest Honour which he has in his Power to confer upon them.

I know, Sir, others besides our Author, have been ready to charge their Brethren with denying the Perfection of Scripture, and setting human Forms on a Level with the Words of Christ himself; and I confess, never any thing I have met with in Life, surprized me more than this Charge; because it would be an Insult to common Sense, to suppose they who advance it, really believe it. They know in their own Consciences, that their Brethren hold the Scriptures to be the only Rule of Faith and Practice, as well as themselves. The Persons arraigned on this Head, value Creeds, Confessions, and human Composures, no farther than they conceive them to give the Sense of Scripture; and they are ready to trample under Foot, with Disdain, all Creeds and Confessions, Schemes and Systems, which contain Doctrines inconsistent with, and not revealed in, Scripture: And it is well if our great Author's Scheme, of what he reckons the Principles and Doctrines of Revelation, does not appear, when publish'd, to deserve this Sort of Treatment from them.

I am sensible, there is something plausible in the Plea, That the Words of divine Revelation are the best; and that if we rest in Scripture-Expressions, we should soon put an End to all Differences. Therefore, it has been the constant Bellow of the Anti-trinitarian Party, *The Bible, the Bible, is the Religion of Protestants!* To which senseless Noise, I am sorry others have returned an Eccho. But this Cry comes, with a very ill Grace, from such as make the Scripture bend to a few Maxims of vain Philosophy, and Science, falsely so called. Besides, were we only to make Use of Scripture Words, without regarding their Meaning, there is no Error too absurd to be cloathed with abused Words of Scripture. Persecution, the most diabolical Infringement of Christ's Prerogative, might be stiled, Compelling Persons to come in, that his House might be filled. Transubstantiation, the most stupid Invention that ever came into Mens Heads, would stand unshaken, on these Words, *This is my Body.* And the Anthropomorphites, the most blockish Sort of People, that ever disturbed the Church of God, would of all be the most formidable Adversaries; because the Scriptures,

ing after the Manner of Men, so often ascribe to God, Head, Hands and Feet.

But to return to our Author; after he had uttered such false Charges against his Brethren, is it not, Sir, very surfeiting, to hear him saying * thus, *Who can reflect on the excellent Nature and Constitution of the Christian Religion, which recommends to us Forbearance, Meekness, Charity, and Love, — by the glorious Example of the Son of God, without being concerned and uneasy to find himself destitute of them?*

An Encomium of Charity, comes with as much Grace from such a fiery censorious Zealot, as an Harangue in Praise of Loyalty would from a Rebel, in Arms against a just and lawful Sovereign; or a Discourse in Commendation of Honesty, from one standing in the Pillory for Perjury. It is hard to know what to make of the Charity of some Sort of Men; if we judge of it by its Effects, it lies in giving Quarter to Error, and in persecuting, with the severest Scourges of the Tongue, all who have a Word to say, in Defense of the Truth, *as it is in Jesus.*

There are several odd Assertions, in our Author's Rhapsody, which I have

not taken Notice of; I have paid no Regard to what he has said about examining the Truth of Christianity: I shall only say in the general, that tho' I am as much for Examination, and against implicate Faith, as he can be, yet I think he has often run into an Extreme; but I confess, Sir, I am weary of the tedious and disagreeable Employment you have put upon me: Tho' I have submitted, at your Request, to the Drudgery of remarking on this Gentleman, yet it is too mean a Work, to be bore with long; and the Time I have spent, is as much as I can afford to such an Undertaking.

You may perhaps expect, that I take some Notice of the *Preface*, prefixed to the Sermon, by the Author's Pastor; I confess, I was not displeased to see it; for as Persons may improve in Writing, from Examples of a good Stile, by imitating them; so, I think they may gain Benefit by perusing Pieces, wrote in a very bad Stile, as is this *Preface*, in order to avoid running into the same Faults. These two Gentlemen reciprocally complimenting one another, in the Way they have done, is extremely diverting. I shall concern myself no farther with the *Preface*, than to set down
one

one very merry Passage; it is this *: *What generous Mind can see the most glorious Cause weakened and injured, merely to support the Authority and Interests of private Persons, or some particular Society? Or see Men of known and approved Fidelity to their King and Country, to Christ and his Religion, disfranchised of their Privileges, and common Liberties, by the By-Laws of some particular Corporation or Company?* Here is a strange Downfall, from the most glorious Cause in the World, that of our King and Country, of Christ and his Religion, to the By-Laws of some particular Corporation or Company. This is an Example of what some have called an Anticlimax; it is hard to find out, whether the Author designed it as Earnest, or Burlesque. When I first read it, it put me in mind of Scarron's Character of Semiramis, That *she was the Founder of Babylon, the Conqueror of the East, and an excellent Housewife.*

The Sermon which I have been considering, is the boldest Attack on the Doctrines of the Reformation, that ever was made by a Dissenter. By my Si-

lence on many things set down in it, I would not have it thought, that I reckon some Matters our Author has run out against, to be of no Moment, - because I take no Notice of what he has said upon them ; for I am sensible that he has only thrown out Flirts, without saying any thing to back them ; they are not worthy of Consideration ; therefore they shall not hinder me from putting an End to the Trouble you have brought upon yourself, from,

Novemb. 1.
1728.

S I R,

Your most humble Servant,

Yours truly
H. W. H.

(39)

since on many things I
would not have it that I
know some Masters our Author has
one article to be of no account, be-
cause I take no notice of what he
said upon them; for I am sensible that
he has only shown our Author without
having any thing to back them; they
are not worthy of Consideration; there-
fore I shall not hinder me from
saying an End to 688766 you have
brought upon yourself, from

I am very truly
Yours

*Ruthless
pursuing*

A
POSTSCRIPT
TO THE
PUBLISHER
OF A
LETTER

Relating to

A Reverend Bookseller in *London*.

*When Folly, Noise, and Slander, rage,
And Calumny reforms the Age;
They in the Wise no Passions raise;
Their Clamours turn to real Praise.
Yet sure, hard-fated is the Tree,
Reduc'd to spatter Dirt with Thee.
Fable of the Oak and the Dunghill.*

L O N D O N:

Printed in the Year MDCCXXIX.

POSTSCRIPT



PUBLISHER

ERRATA.

Title, for *forest*, read *forest*. page 3. line 12. for *embellish*,
read *establish*. p. 9. l. 5. for *but*, read *bit*.

PRINTED BY

A. B. EVANS, BOOKSELLER, 10, LONDON.

Table of the Oke and the Ditch.
The first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, twenty-first, twenty-second, twenty-third, twenty-fourth, twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth, twenty-ninth, thirtieth, thirty-first, thirty-second, thirty-third, thirty-fourth, thirty-fifth, thirty-sixth, thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth, thirty-ninth, fortieth, forty-first, forty-second, forty-third, forty-fourth, forty-fifth, forty-sixth, forty-seventh, forty-eighth, forty-ninth, fiftieth, fifty-first, fifty-second, fifty-third, fifty-fourth, fifty-fifth, fifty-sixth, fifty-seventh, fifty-eighth, fifty-ninth, sixtieth, sixty-first, sixty-second, sixty-third, sixty-fourth, sixty-fifth, sixty-sixth, sixty-seventh, sixty-eighth, sixty-ninth, seventieth, seventy-first, seventy-second, seventy-third, seventy-fourth, seventy-fifth, seventy-sixth, seventy-seventh, seventy-eighth, seventy-ninth, eightieth, eighty-first, eighty-second, eighty-third, eighty-fourth, eighty-fifth, eighty-sixth, eighty-seventh, eighty-eighth, eighty-ninth, ninetieth, ninety-first, ninety-second, ninety-third, ninety-fourth, ninety-fifth, ninety-sixth, ninety-seventh, ninety-eighth, ninety-ninth, one hundredth.

LONDON.

Printed in the Year MDCCLXIX.

S I R,

I Fully designed my being the Author of a Letter, remarking on a Piece wrote by a certain Reverend Person of your Trade, should have been concealed, because no Man can add much to his Reputation, by having to do with such weak Discourses, as that which I examined: But being informed from the Printer, that he has menaced him; to prevent his putting You, or any Person to whom I am an utter Stranger, to Trouble, I have judg'd it proper to acknowledge myself to be the Author of what he has complain'd of.

I am told, the Subject of his Complaint is, that I have represented him as an unfair Trader, in the fifteenth Page. The Purport of what I there said, was this, That tho' a Man may have such Principles as my Author might reckon generous, yet if he is unfair in his Dealings, he ought, let his Principles be ever so good, to be detested by all honest Men.

I should be extremely sorry, if the Gentleman I have to do with, should find his own Picture drawn, where I was only speaking in the general. Were he such
a Man

a Man as I had been describing, I should not wonder at the Heat he has shewn and the Noise he has made about this Matter; for

Conscientia ipse sibi de seipso putat omnia dici.

I assure you, Sir, that I had not the least Design to reflect on your Brother-Trader; therefore it is a Slander, for him to charge me with what was never in my Thoughts. I have no Acquaintance with him; and so cannot pretend to say, from my own Knowledge, whether he is an honourable Trader, or not. And where I know nothing against a Man, I am willing to think, and hope, he is as he ought to be.

I see no manner of Reason, why he should think himself to be struck at, if he is not defective in the Observation of the Rules of Justice, in the Way of his Trade. However, lest others, as well as himself, should apply what I said, to Him; I take this Occasion, publicly and solemnly to declare, to Him and the World, That I had no Intention to charge him with Dishonesty in the Way of his Dealing.

Lincoln's Inn,
November 13. 1728.

A. TAYLOR.